

BACKGROUND BRIEFING BY THREE SENIOR U.S. DEFENSE OFFICIALS
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
DECEMBER 14, 1994

FIRST OFFICIAL: Well, let me cover--really look ahead to tomorrow and our departure for Moscow to join the Vice President in Moscow. I'll do that and I'll also touch upon one item discussed today that has absolutely nothing to do with Bosnia, but at least one of you asked me about. So I'll mention that.

I guess I'll start on that subject and that was the discussion today among the ministers of the mission for the Alliance that's very different from the missions that you've been discussing over the last day and a half, a very important and solidly and rather portentiously military topic, namely dealing as an Alliance with weapons of mass destruction on the battlefield, which even in the midst of Bosnia and everything else, I think it's a credit to the Alliance to have the foresight and the grounding in military matters to be considering.

So I want to tell you a little something about that because it's both substantively and procedurally innovative. Substantively innovative because the Alliance had historically viewed since it had been oriented towards the East-West confrontation it understood that that was one that involved weapons of mass destruction. The tendency would be to forget that aspect of its mission in the post Cold War world. But the heads of state decided last January that even as the individual members of NATO were concerned about proliferation, the military structure, the defense structures need to be concerned about its consequences for conflict. So that was a new thing for them. They set up a group to do that called the Defense Group on Proliferation. This was the first report of that group.

Now, the first task they gave this group was to elaborate their concerns and their concerns were in three categories. Today they were briefed to the ministers. First, is the danger from the East, you might say. The continuing danger associated with the continuing existence of the weapons of mass destruction arsenal in the former Soviet Union. That's obviously the same weapons but in a very different political climate. Second ingredient is one very much on the minds of the Southern tier members of NATO and that is their proximity to the Middle East and to North Africa and the existence there of chemical weapons programs, biological weapons programs, and ballistic missile programs and, of course, fledgling nuclear programs. So those states and the Alliance as a whole are concerned about that second tier. Third is because imports from elsewhere in the world could very quickly change the military equation on NATO's periphery, NATO has to be worried about sources of supply throughout the world.

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So in those three tiers the ministers looked today at what the risks are basically in intelligence or threat assessment, were briefed on that. Then directed effort which will continue over the next year to adapt NATO's defense structures to deal with that aspect of the new security environment. I wanted to call your attention to that because it's somewhat off access from peacekeeping and all the other things that you're paying attention to, but it is new and it's potentially very important for the Alliance. A final note on it, it is procedurally important also.

This body, the Defense Group on Proliferation, I chair with a Frenchman, Jean-Claude Mallet [phonetic] of the Ministry of Defense of France. Those of you who have been around NATO long enough know that it has never happened before that a group on defense matters has had the French involved. This is the first time the French have ever participated in a defense matter. That's significant for the Alliance. So both substantively and procedurally, this is something new and I wanted to call your attention to it.

Let's look ahead to Moscow and I think our basic approach to Moscow is the same as the Vice President's, namely that we have an awful lot of business to do with Russia. We look at our relationship with them very pragmatically. We have areas where we disagree. We have areas where we agree, or areas where our interest coincide, and we have areas where our interests are disjoint and we pursue them separately. We have a lot of areas where we can cooperate and need to cooperate. And even though there have been some public exchanges of words in the last few weeks, we are approaching the Moscow trip in a very business-like way. We have any number of very solid issues to take up with the Russians. Every expectation that we can have fruitful discussions of those issues and that's our basic approach.

We will be talking to the Russians about NATO expansion which was the subject that here in Brussels and then again in Budapest, there appears to have been some misunderstandings, or misapprehensions about, and so we're going to repeat our policy once again to Russia and emphasize that it has not changed since September. There's been no change of policy in the United States or in NATO on NATO expansion. There's been no acceleration. There's no timetable to accelerate. That NATO is going to expand, but will do so in a way that doesn't create any new dividing lines in Europe, any new walls, any new confrontations and so forth.

We will also take pains to explain the Alliance's plan as described for the very first stage of what will be a multiphased process that was described in the NAC communiqué, namely what will go on in 1995 because they're clearly--I don't think, understood what it was that comprised this first phase which is a phase of internal discussion within the Alliance of, as we say, if you're all familiar with the five interrogatories of "whether, how, why, when, and who." It's not a matter of whether, we are going to do it. We are discussing the "how" and the "why" this year. That's what phase one is about. That'll be a discussion that takes place within the Alliance.

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So careful, deliberate pace. One of the things we'll be doing very seriously and of which I'm sure the Russian minister of defense whom Dr. Perry will see in Moscow will understand entirely is that since NATO is a serious military Alliance, there are serious military matters that need to be adjudicated within the Alliance before expansion could occur. That's part of the "how and why." One of the reasons "why" is for objective reasons. Expansion isn't going to happen anytime soon.

And so with that out of the way we hope to focus our discussions on the here and now, and as Dr. Perry said on the plane, which is Partnership for Peace and making that effective, making that meaningful. The Russians are, we hope, just this far from signing the agreements that will constitute their agreement with the Partnership for Peace about their participation in the Partnership for Peace, first of all, and second their separate agreement with NATO that describes their relationship with NATO beyond the Partnership for Peace. So we hope they take those steps, and we hope that they understand when we explain once again what our policy is, our unchanged policy, that we can dispel any misunderstandings in that regard.

Q. I talked to the Moscow bureau today and they said that they understood Grachev was not back yet from the Caucasus. Have you all got definite word that he's going to meet Dr. Perry?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Yes. Obviously, he's involved in a complex situation there so that could change, but our understanding at this time is that Grachev will meet with Perry. I think you also know what our position is on the Chechnya situation. I'll just repeat it. While we view this as a Russian internal affair, at the same time we're not at all indifferent to the potential for human tragedy here so we want the negotiations to take place and we want this to be handled with the absolute minimum of bloodshed. Obviously, it's a fast moving situation, but what's happening to at least to my knowledge as of this hour is consistent with that, but we don't know what the future will hold. As I said, that being our view of the situation, we're going to go ahead and deal with all the issues we have to deal with.

Now I won't go into what all those issues are. We'll talk about them on the airplane, but they range from a host of economic issues to political issues to a very large number of security issues. Of course, those are the ones you'll be the most interested in. Those are really at the heart of the Vice President's agenda.

There'll be basically three scenes you should have in mind as you go to Moscow. The first is the Vice President's meetings at the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission itself with a number of cabinet members, all of them carrying portfolios and each of them chairing jointly with their Russian counterparts commissions on a variety of topics, some economic, some technological, some security. Dr. Perry chairs the conversion committee with counterparts from the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Defense in Russia.

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Second sort of circus, or circle is the -- [laughter] -- I'm thinking of a three-ring circus, but the second ring, if you like, is the Vice President's meetings outside of the commission with Prime Minister Chernomyrdin on some of the most important security issues we have those two deal with. And also if his health permits it, President Yeltsin. And then the third will be Dr. Perry's meeting with Minister Grachev, which will occur Friday afternoon.

We will be arriving in the middle of the commission meeting. First event as we step off the plane will be a dinner that we will go to with the heads of the commissions on the Russian side. And I'm prepared before we get on the plane, or on the plane, to go through with you all the substantive issues that we're going to deal with the Russians, but the major message I want to send you is, we're geared up to carry out this very complex agenda just as we would have been going back three weeks, four weeks, and it's a pretty meaty agenda.

Q. Will Perry and Gore reiterate this message, the Chechnya situation that's an internal affair, but try to handle it with a minimum of bloodshed if you could?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Yeah, of course, we look forward to learning from Grachev what his assessment of the situation is on the ground and where he thinks he's going with that issue. But on the basis of the understanding we have now of the situation, that's our view of it.

Q. Can you talk about the discussion in the NATO meetings today about the Alliance helping the Russians destroy their chemical weapon stocks?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Yes, that was a subject that was raised by The Netherlands Minister of Defense, who apprised the other ministers that The Netherlands is interested in working with the Russians on this, and as you know--and as I think Dr. Perry had the opportunity to pass out to his Netherlands' counterpart, but I'm not sure of that--we also have a very substantial effort--potential effort, I should say--at getting the Russians--helping them to launch a program that will inevitably be a large and expensive program, to get rid of those stocks. They're committed to doing so. They don't argue with the proposition that they'd like to get it done. But it's a big and expensive undertaking. As you know in our own case, we've devoted a lot of time and money to figuring out exactly how we're going to get underway and then to getting underway. Now the Russians have a very large stock of this stuff, some of it older and under conditions that neither they nor we regard as safe.

Q. What is large?

FIRST OFFICIAL: 40,000 tons is the number I remember. And I believe that's a good number. And that's a variety of agents and they're trying to figure out what approach they want to take to it technologically. You can burn the stuff. You can try to neutralize it chemically. They're attracted to the neutralization. Solution--we don't care so much which paths they take, but under the Nunn-Lugar Program, we are going to provide some

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technical assistance to them to get started. We can't foot the bill for the whole project, but we're going to try to get them on the road to getting this down.

Q: What would NATO do?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Well, let me draw the analogy with the nuclear weapons part of Nunn-Lugar, because they're also the NATO partners. There's something called the Group on Nuclear Weapons here at NATO, which is a forum for coordinating the efforts of the NATO partners in dismantlement in Russia. So for example, France and the U.K., which are nuclear weapons states, are providing nuclear weapons storage transport containers, just to give you an example, whereas other countries in the Alliance that are not nuclear weapons states may be helping out with fissionable material, safeguarding. So sort of from each according to his capabilities. And what we try to do is share information about our various programs of assistance and cooperation, so we're not all trying to do the same thing while leaving cracks open. And in the chemical area, what we learned today is we need to do the same thing. Because, unknown to us, other parties are working the same problem we are.

Q: NATO's sort of a clearing house rather than a point agency?

FIRST OFFICIAL: That's right. It's a coordinating function that NATO performs. With that, if I could excuse myself, I'll talk to you again tomorrow on the plane (inaudible).

SECOND OFFICIAL: Let me just say a few words by introduction. I think just about everybody was here this morning when [the third official] and I briefed. Subsequent to that, the chiefs of defense of the NATO troop-contributing nations plus Italy plus the United States were present. Met over lunch to talk further about the meeting they're going to have in The Hague on Monday and Tuesday. They will have at their meeting the force commander of UNPROFOR. They will, during the process of the two days at different times. They've issued invitations to a number of other countries, essentially in two categories: other NATO countries; and non-NATO troop-contributing countries. We have no results on any of those invitations, some of which are just in the process now of going out.

Just to recap a couple of things we said this morning, that they will be looking at ways to help UNPROFOR be more effective in doing its job within existing authority under the United Nations resolutions, and within the existing mandate of UNPROFOR, which is a humanitarian mandate. They will be looking at a number of these ideas. They will then present their conclusions to their countries and will be making them available to the United Nations and to NATO not long after that meeting, with a target the end of next week to get that thinking and planning done. We see certain advantages in this. Building upon the basic change of climate here in the last week, where the issue has changed quite dramatically from concern about how one would get UNPROFOR forces out to what is required to help UNPROFOR forces stay. We see the advantage that countries that are both NATO countries and troop-contributors will, under this effort and events of the last week, feel less internal tension between these two functions. We also see this as an opportunity for NATO and the United Nations to work together positively on something that is very much in the common interest, namely, what UNPROFOR can do to be more effective.

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Do you want to say something to start [third official]?

THIRD OFFICIAL: No--only just to say that not very much has changed since we met with you this morning.

Q: Can you walk through your meetings (inaudible)?

Q: Excuse me, let me just get one thing clear. Are you talking about the U.N., or are you talking about the (inaudible)?

(mixed voices)

Q: And also, we assume that these non-NATO troop-contributing countries are--in fact, all of them--Russia would be included (inaudible).

SECOND OFFICIAL: The invitation is going out to all of them.

Q: All of the non-NATO (inaudible)?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Yes.

Q: I'm sorry. So all of them--the NATO troop-contributing countries will be there, do you think? They can go?

SECOND OFFICIAL: The meeting will start out with a core group. At some point--at different points during the deliberation over the two days, these other two groups will be invited to come, and the invitations are just being sent out as we speak.

Q: And the other two groups?

SECOND OFFICIAL: One is other NATO countries, of which there are five.

Q: And the other one is?

SECOND OFFICIAL: And the other is the non-NATO troop-contributing countries.

Q: I mean just as--you're saying that this is an opportunity for NATO and the U.N. to work together and to get some harmony. It's also an opportunity for U.N. and NATO to clash and to vehemently disagree with each other. I mean you have potential for both directions here, don't you?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Well, we can't predict the outcome, but we're starting with the basic premise of attempting to find ways to help UNPROFOR do the job that it was sent there to do, and that everyone who is there agrees is the job that they are there to do.

THIRD OFFICIAL: Remember that these chiefs of defense will be meeting in The Hague, not with a NATO hat on or a U.N. hat on, but with a national hat on. And they will report back to national capitals. So the institutional clash should not be, I think, a major problem. If the question is, "What can you do that's militarily feasible to help

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UNPROFOR accomplish its missions more effectively." And that's not a NATO or a U.N. issue. Essentially, this is for each of these chiefs of defense to discuss with each other, what list of things looks to them to be militarily feasible.

Q: What's the mechanics of that? Will the Dutch defense minister act as rapporteur?

THIRD OFFICIAL: He will act as the host and chair, and the CHODS will report back to their own national capitals. This is not a decision-making meeting. It's an informational meeting.

Q: Then how will the results of this meeting filter up to the U.N. hierarchy? How will it get to the decision-making stage?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Well, at the end of the meeting, no doubt there will be a summary done so everybody has a common basis of what has been concluded from the discussions. Then each of the chiefs of defense will go back to his and her own country and brief those officials. We anticipate there'll also be briefings at the U.N., either directly or by them, and briefings here at NATO. And then it is up to the decision-making process of the United Nations and of NATO to decide how to carry it forward.

Q: Is this a one-day meeting?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Two. Two days.

Q: Well, just to clarify here, I thought from what you said earlier that the object of this was to have some sort of recommendation or proposal, not just a list of (inaudible).

SECOND OFFICIAL: That is correct.

Q: So that the summary that you're talking about would be in the form of--

SECOND OFFICIAL: Recommendations.

Q: --of recommendations.

SECOND OFFICIAL: That's correct.

Q: And following up on what Jack says, if these vehicles troops perform their job properly, (inaudible) that is to the disadvantage of the Serbs because it provides some kind of buffer on Muslim suffering. Doesn't that immediately create a problem with the Russians who are coming to the meeting?

THIRD OFFICIAL: Not necessarily. I mean, the mission of humanitarian assistance has been accepted right throughout the civil war. And the argument that that necessarily has to be to the detriment of the Serbs I don't think follows.

Q: If the Serbs accepted, then why are they harassing the peacekeepers and humanitarian aid workers? So much (inaudible).

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THIRD OFFICIAL: Well, I mean, that--there can be a variety of motivations there. If the Serbs harass long enough, then they wind up with a lifting of the embargo and with a removal of UNPROFOR. They may face a far worse situation.

SECOND OFFICIAL: One of the objectives is to come out with a common front on the part of the NATO troop-contributing nations, and with the responsible officials from UNPROFOR, on steps that could be taken to move forward. It's hoped that these will be instrumental in their own right, but also that the unity we hope to build with this will itself send a message that these humanitarian activities should be permitted to proceed.

Q: Let me just ask a point just on this schedule just to clarify this (inaudible). Apart from this morning, you were talking about a ten-day, I think, someone used, one of you two guys used a ten-day process to really come up with some recommendations to be implemented. So what happens here? There's a two-day meeting. At the end you have your recommendations. And that's the agreed common front? DeLepresle signs off on this and then they just go do it? Or do--there's more consultation? In national capitals? And then over a period of a week or two you hope to come up with something?

SECOND OFFICIAL: The consultations began at noon today.

Q: Right.

SECOND OFFICIAL: (inaudible). By the time we reach Monday morning, the individual nations and the individual CHODS will have had many opportunities to consult with one another and exchange ideas. The ideas will be brought to the meeting Monday morning, of the group of eleven, I think, is the number. During the two days, they will be meeting with these others to get more ideas to work over these, to work out the feasibility. Between then and a period--target the end of the week--there will continue to be consultations, with the idea that an agreed list of recommendations will be briefed to the individual countries and we would presume, directly to the U.N. and directly to NATO.

Q: By the end of the week, you're going to have something.

SECOND OFFICIAL: The target is--

Q: By "agreed" meaning agreed by the U.N. as well as by the (inaudible).

SECOND OFFICIAL: The target is that by roughly the end of next week, that the CHODS will be able to make recommendations to their countries and will be able to brief the U.N. and NATO about recommendations that have come out of this set of meetings.

Q: (inaudible)

SECOND OFFICIAL: I'm sorry. I didn't hear you.

Q: You mentioned about the involvement in the NATO (inaudible) would come back to NATO. What sort of role (inaudible) beyond the current security (inaudible)?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Well, essentially, the responsibility for acting upon these

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recommendations rests with the United Nations. And with UNPROFOR specifically, because its forces are involved. If the recommendations or the way that they're interpreted by UNPROFOR, would call for a role for NATO--either ones we're already agreed or ones we haven't agreed--then they will come to us.

Q: Can one or both of you walk us through the discussion and briefing on withdrawal? How long did it last? Was there much discussion? After the briefing, sort of, what are the parameters in--

THIRD OFFICIAL: It took a significant part of the restricted session this morning.

Q: So an hour, maybe?

THIRD OFFICIAL: About roughly--about an hour would probably--maybe a little bit more. I'm not sure. General Joulwan presented the briefing. There were comments. And remember the briefing is an (inaudible) concept briefing. It's not detail down to the last unit, and so forth. It's a concept briefing, which stressed, as I mentioned this morning, that this will be a significant force, and under unified command. Unified NATO command. And there were then comments, I think by almost every country around the table. I--

SECOND OFFICIAL: Just about.

THIRD OFFICIAL: I can't now--I mean, there may have been one or two that didn't, but I think every country commented. I would have said, to characterize it, that it was--of those who commented, unless I've missed one or two--universally positive. I mean there was--was very--

Q: About the plan?

THIRD OFFICIAL: About the plan. About the fact that the United States was going to play this role. There were a number of very positive comments about the fact that President Clinton had made this decision. I think, by and large, it was a highly successful briefing, from our point of view.

Q: Without getting into the notion of numbers, was there any troop numbers in a concept briefing which talks about significant force used in any way (inaudible) adjectives.

THIRD OFFICIAL: No, they were types of units. They didn't use a number like X thousand, but they did talk about the numbers of brigades and things of that sort.

Q: We were told that what had happened when Perry spoke about this he cited three conditions for the President's commitment. Sole NATO command; the force has to be big enough, not just to deter, but to deal with any hostile actions.

SECOND OFFICIAL: To intimidate I think is the word.

Q:...to intimidate and that that whole commitment is subject to approval by Congress.

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THIRD OFFICIAL: Right, he reiterated those this morning.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Subject to consultations with Congress and he indicated that the sounding so far had been very positive.

Q: There was one other thing that we were told on the subject of making UNPROFOR more effective. To the extent that this can happen it would reduce congressional pressure for early lifting of the arms embargo. Would you say that ...

SECOND OFFICIAL: One of the key things that Secretary Perry has emphasized while he has been here is trying to create the conditions whereby UNPROFOR can stay--especially against the unanimity here at NATO wanting to have UNPROFOR stay--especially now that the United States has made its commitment to provide the safety net if they have to leave. And, he stressed two particular concerns that might lead UNPROFOR to be withdrawn. One would be a perception on the part of troop contributors that UNPROFOR could no longer provide a useful function. That it is unable to perform the job that it came to do.

The other would be, if there were a resolution passed in the United States Congress calling for unilateral lift, because we have, I think, virtually all, if not all, of the troop contributors, at least within the NATO (inaudible) have said under such circumstances they would find it necessary to withdraw their forces. So the emphasis here has been, in part, on being able to demonstrate that something effective can be done--more effective can be done to help UNPROFOR to do its job, partially in the context of the prospect of a lift resolution.

Q: At this point in the planning for this, with now Germany, Greece, Portugal saying they will help in some way, do the military commanders believe that they have sufficient force to carry out conceptually the plan that has been designed here. Have enough people stepped up and raised their hands as far as you know?

THIRD OFFICIAL: Yes, in countries that haven't spoken up about this before today volunteered that they would participate.

Q: Those are the three that I mentioned, or are there others?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Some of the existing troop-contributing nations, without going into who they may be, have said that they would be prepared to put added forces in for this purpose.

Q: We were told this was sort of a multi-stage concept plan. Is it a two stage plan, three stage plan, or a five stage plan?

THIRD OFFICIAL: There are multi-phases, but I can't...

Q: Did any of the phases (inaudible) at all with what happens after the forces are gone?

THIRD OFFICIAL: The answer to that is that we will have to think through plans for what happens next, but that was not what we focused on.

Q: (inaudible)

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THIRD OFFICIAL: It was listed as one of the things which has to be addressed at some point, but that was not the center of the plan, the center of the plan was how do you get forces in and out.

Q: Did you get any discussion of how long that type of operation would take in terms of days, weeks, or months?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Well, a lot of that depends on what happens. We have, as you know, done a lot of planning at NATO. Withdrawal planning for a benign environment was completed some time ago. The thrust of this particular planning takes the worst case and also considers some intermediate cases that could require fewer forces. Obviously, the circumstances that happen to occur, would have a lot to do with the timing and the pacing and the like. The mandate for the NATO council, in which the NATO military have responded to, is to do it right. And it is comprehensive, it is thorough, and it involves sufficient application of force to make sure that the best possible opportunities are seized to make sure that it comes out as well as it possibly can. As (THIRD OFFICIAL) I think mentioned to Secretary Perry this morning, one of the objectives of the United States is to have sufficient force involved in this which to be overwhelming and frankly to intimidate anybody who might want to act against the implementation of this withdrawal.

Q: Wasn't there a meeting of the military commanders on Monday? And was there any discussion then do you know of saying that they ought to get together and talk just as they are planning to talk.....was there some frustration on their part that's having this bubble-up or was it distinctly borne this morning from the meeting of Ministers?

SECOND OFFICIAL: I'm not too sure I follow the question.

Q: What I am saying, you talked about military commanders coming up with ideas about what is militarily feasible to help make the force more effective--its clearly stymied and ineffective right now. What I'm saying is, have the military commanders in NATO expressed frustrations and therefore asked the ministers to pursue this kind of process to come up with alternatives?

SECOND OFFICIAL: The Military Committee and Chiefs of Staff session met on Monday, as it always does and on Tuesday prior to the DPC meetings and spent most of the time--to get to the question of Bosnia--reviewing the same materials that were reviewed by Ministers today in regard to withdrawal planning. The impetus for the meeting that's going to take place next Monday came out of thinking within the U.S. Government, most immediately out of the meeting between Minister Leotard and Secretary Perry on Monday, and then on ideas presented by Secretary Perry beginning last night here at NATO. So the impetus from this comes out of the Ministers themselves at the breakfast. The (inaudible) are coming up with these ideas or the Chiefs of Staff for a very simple reason, that these are the people within NATO most likely to have the ideas, or if they do not have them themselves, to say what is feasible and what is not and what would be the requirements in terms of resources in order to implement any plan to be carried

forward.

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Q: Whose idea was it, to have a Chief of Staffs meeting in the Hague?

THIRD OFFICIAL: The offer was by the Dutch. The idea—to go back to the chronology when the Chiefs of Defense met on Monday—they were working out the agenda which was largely about the withdrawal plan. Perry came with these ideas which he and Leotard discussed. We talked about it. They were raised in some bilaterals, they were raised at breakfast. At breakfast, the Dutch volunteered to be the host, and that is why it will be in the Hague.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Secretary Perry proposed that it be done with a lead by the NATO troop-contributing nations Chiefs of Staff and the decision to have it in the Hague, as (THIRD OFFICIAL) said, was the recommendation of the Dutch.

Q: Has this been discussed with the French, one assumes they will come since they are deeply interested in this whole military strategy?

THIRD OFFICIAL: We've been in touch with the French several times today.

Q: And they have said yes they will?

THIRD OFFICIAL: Yes, in fact the highest levels. This is, obviously the French don't participate in the DPC. This is designed where we all pull together so we have—Secretary's talked to them, I've talked to them, General Shalikashvili talked to them. (SECOND OFFICIAL) has talked to them. The point is that they are not here physically, but they have been very present otherwise.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Let me remind you of something I've probably neglected. This is not a NATO effort being carried forward on Monday and Tuesday. It is an effort of the Chiefs of Staff of a group of particular troop-contributing nations outside the NATO framework to which others are going to be invited.

Q: (inaudible)...picked up in Washington very stronglyshould a withdrawal take place, that is the Italian...

SECOND OFFICIAL: I think that is something that will have to be looked up by the Chiefs of Defense next week as to whether any ideas that they are canvassing could indeed be useful in both circumstances. The emphasis, however, is withdrawal planning being completed by NATO, obviously working with UNPROFOR, and, for the Chiefs of Defense looking next week as to what can be done to help UNPROFOR stay.

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Q. Can you clear up one little thing you said about troop-contributing nations being willing to supply additional forces for a withdrawal force. One would assume from that comment that you were referring to Britain and France. Is there any reason why one shouldn't make that logical assumption--that those would be countries that would contribute additional forces?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Why don't you ask them? I don't think I'm in a position now, because these were provisional offers that were made to the NATO military authorities. I don't think we should be the ones to say who they were.

Q. These 11 nations you're talking about--the core nations--they include Italy and Turkey?

SECOND OFFICIAL: That's correct.

Q. They don't have troops in Bosnia.

THIRD OFFICIAL: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Turkey, U.K., U.S. are the core.

Q. Then the expanded group becomes from 11 to how many?

THIRD OFFICIAL: It's the other five from NATO, plus all non-NATO troop contributors which would be Russia, Ukraine...

SECOND OFFICIAL: There are quite a few there.

Q. Can I just follow that question about the Italian defense minister because I heard that this afternoon in another context? Is this blue route thing have double utility in the sense that it's a way in and it's a way out, or is that not part of this discussion?

THIRD OFFICIAL: No. That's not been the origin of it; it's not been the intent of it.

Q. Did you get what you considered a satisfactory reply from Minister Ruhe in terms of contributions or is it in your mind too early to tell just what the Germans may be willing or not willing to do in this case?

SECOND OFFICIAL: Which case?

Q. Providing forces for withdrawal. And another question--is there any worry or concern on your part that you're going to just be transferring the tensions that exist within the Contact Group with Russia present (inaudible) you may be bumping into each other in terms of what you can or want to do?

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THIRD OFFICIAL: I think the Russians have an interest in UNPROFOR which is more effective in its humanitarian mission. An UNPROFOR which is humiliated and withdrawn under adverse conditions is bad for the U.N. The Russians don't want to see that. And also to the extent that the Russians concern themselves about the same view that the Serbs have that goes back to the answer I gave earlier to a question of why the Serbs might have an interest in not seeing UNPROFOR withdrawn.

Q. And on Ruhe?

SECOND OFFICIAL: I think you'll have to ask the Germans on that.

Q. I'm asking for your perception...

THIRD OFFICIAL: I can't say anything about resources. What I will say is that we had a very nice bilateral with Volker Ruhe.

Thanks

END

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NATO Countries' Brass to Meet On Bolstering U.N. Bosnia Force

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Washington Post Foreign Service

BRUSSELS, Dec. 14—Defense ministers of the NATO countries involved in Bosnia agreed today to have their military chiefs of staff meet next week to draft recommendations for bolstering U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Balkans.

European governments continued to back away from warnings, issued only a week ago, of an imminent withdrawal of their troops from Bosnia. But their renewed commitment to stay depends on reaching consensus about new measures to safeguard the peacekeepers from Bosnian Serb harassment and to improve their effectiveness in delivering humanitarian aid.

At a breakfast meeting this morning, representatives from the United States, Italy and eight NATO countries with troops in Bosnia discussed proposals by France and others to modify the deployment, assignments and rules of the peacekeepers. But the only firm consensus to emerge was that something must be done to help bolster the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and to demonstrate that the force still is worth supporting, according to U.S. officials present.

Military chiefs of staff, joined by U.N. military commanders, will meet in The Hague on Monday and Tuesday to assess possible changes in the U.N. operation without altering its essentially humanitarian nature. Invitations were also extended today to Russia and other non-NATO countries with peacekeeping troops in Bosnia.

Proposals under discussion include consolidating U.N. units, scattered across roughly 20 sites in Bosnia, into fewer, more easily defended "stockades"; fortifying a supply corridor from Croatia's Adriatic coast to Sarajevo; improving security around Sarajevo's airport, closed to relief flights because of a threat from Serb

antiaircraft missiles; and allowing U.N. soldiers to defend themselves more robustly.

Not under consideration, according to officials here, is an increase in the 22,000 U.N. troops deployed, or a modification of the troublesome "dual key" command structure, under which both U.N. and NATO commanders must authorize airstrikes.

"What we want is professional advice—not a political statement, but professional advice from those who will have to deliver the end result," British Defense Minister Malcolm Rifkind said of next week's deliberations.

Some of the proposals to be considered have been resurrected from various peace plans over the past two years. Moreover, NATO is wary of raising expectations of tougher action, since such unredeemed pledges have been made before.

American officials credited President Clinton's commitment last week of U.S. ground troops to a Bosnian withdrawal operation for triggering a shift in allied attitudes. "The issue has changed quite dramatically from how to get UNPROFOR countries out of Bosnia to what would be necessary to make UNPROFOR countries stay," a senior U.S. official said.

Because the Europeans are assured that their soldiers can be evacuated promptly from Bosnia if the situation does not improve, U.S. officials said, they are more willing to consider remaining.

European officials attributed their change of heart to a realization that abruptly pulling out of Bosnia would be worse for the Bosnians, for regional stability and for U.N. and NATO credibility than the risks of staying.

Nevertheless, should efforts to revamp the U.N. operation prove fruitless, NATO military officers are proceeding with contingency planning for an evacuation of U.N. troops not

just from Bosnia but also from neighboring Croatia and Macedonia. Alliance defense ministers listened today to an overview of those plans

from Gen. George Joulwan, the supreme allied commander.

Officials who attended the briefing said Joulwan did not mention specific numbers of troops required for an extraction operation. But NATO sources said an evacuation force would likely include seven to nine army brigades—probably at least 30,000 troops—and require additional aircraft to those currently patrolling over Bosnia, including planes from at least one U.S. aircraft carrier.

Addressing the plenary meeting of NATO ministers, Defense Secretary William J. Perry attached several conditions to U.S. participation. According to U.S. officials, Perry said the operation must be under the sole command of NATO; the withdrawal force must be big enough to "intimidate" potential attackers and to respond with overwhelming firepower if attacked; and any U.S. participation is subject to consultations with Congress.

In the other major subject of discussion today, defense ministers reviewed the potential membership of East European countries in NATO.

Although ministers vowed to "stick firmly to our guns notwithstanding Russia's objections" and press ahead with expansion planning, as one NATO official put it, defense officials stressed that the process will be deliberate and lengthy.